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VOLUMES ISSUED, OR PLANNED FOR EARLY PUBLICATION

I. THE TEMPERING. *By Howard Buck.*

II. FORGOTTEN SHRINES. *By John C. Farrar.*

The Tempering

HOWARD BUCK

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TO

MY MOTHER AND FATHER

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PART I

THE LAST RIDE OF THE SEASON.

"Yes, you may take car if strictly careful."
—*Parental Telegram.*

Up with the gas, for a life or a lass,
Never a thing like man shall pass!
Ho, for the hills so steep,
With a driving, striving power!
And over the brow we leap
With the roar of a rushing shower!
The winds whip dry on our laughing mouth,
But Oh, for a draught of that heady South,
The cheeks that crack and the lips like clay,
To drain to the full! lips, heart, to-day
Drowned in the flood of the forests dim,
Rushing past so fast, as we shiver and swim
Through the ocean of shadow—then out to the sun,
Gold unforetold—and the wonder won!
The panting road that runs like a dream
To the dawn, 'tis the beach and the sand a-gleam,
Muffled a moment in stinging smoke of the shore,
Gone, reeling on, and we are the ocean's roar!

For on for ever we go, we go,
I and a jolly fellow or two,
Free from college, to Maine repairing,
Out from books for a little airing,
Over the hills and valleys faring!
And what will he say, my dear Grand-dad,
With never a note of warning had,
Hearing a shout and a shrieking brake,
When out jump I and a couple more,
Dropt from Yale at his old front door?
"Am I dead or awake?" surprise a-shake,
And the heartiest welcome a man can make.
Oh, but he's good—and he'll crack the same joke
That I heard when I kicked in my cradle and woke!

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Then supper so good, and a big, wide bed,
And never a thought or a care in the head:
Just for a day ere the winter's down—
Then will we back to the cussed town.

OF A NIGHT.

'Tis the devil of a night, all hot and sweet,
  Till a sweat not ichor gets in the blood,
And we chafe and chide to be glued to a seat:
  Damn it, I say, but I *must* abroad!

Out in the night to wander, wander,
  Out in the night with this sweet, mad scent,
Under the shadowy elm-arch yonder—
  Shadows and sounds and odors blent!

Give me your arm: we'll strike forever
  A stride to reach to the front of the day,
Meet it and greet it! Ah, friend, did you ever
  Feel lips of a girl like the night's astray

Over your brow and your cheek and your eyes,
  Touching your hands, down neck so cool
A shiver forever, mad, mad surprise?
  —Wander we: who sleeps is a fool.

Wander, wander! The sky is yonder,
  Up, aye a million miles out of sight,
And we, dry motes, with souls to ponder
  The bliss of a kiss from the Infinite!

Give me your arm: our stride be straight,
  Over the world to the front of the day,
Breast to breast with the flaming Gate,
  When the marvel breaks with the mists away;

Breaks untrammeled of scent or sound;
  Breaks like God from his Word, and is He;
Breaks as my soul leaps free from the ground—
  Flung back, to arise at last and *be*.

A FRIENDSHIP.

THE lift of a great impulse up and up. . . .
Oh, thou art as a billow bearing forth,
Urged by the insistent Wind of the North,
Inevitable, eternal, blinding-bright, foam-soft!
The ship of my life reels to feel the surge
Of that great power bearing it aloft;
Trembles and sways before the resistless urge,
While a pure wind blows keen upon my brow.
This is thy friendship now,
A mighty power. Oh, thou hast seemed to sup
At God's great feast of wisdom and of love,
High in the glowing halls of heaven above;
To drain immortal nectar from Christ's cup
That meant to earth no idle purity,
But a great vision high, strong as the sea—
The lift of a great impulse up and up!

HEART–SONG.

BEAUTIFUL, wild, with a breeze abroad
Dimpling the sunlit lake like mad,
All the bright day a gay young God,
Showering the gems of his youth, and glad
To live and give on a day like this
When the breeze that blows on the brow's a kiss.

Beautiful so, with the thrill of life
Awake in sunlight, a lilting song;
Blood a-leap for the exquisite strife
Of living this day out full and strong;
And a strength that is full as the cool wind is,
And Life's full lips in one long kiss

Pressed close on yours like a bursting flower!
Oh, a spurt of grape, a laugh, a quip,
Rain on the cheek from a thunder-shower
Out of the North! just—life's at the lip:
Ah, drain to the dregs that dizzy draught—
What? a young satyr behind you laughed?

AFTER AN EARLY MORNING THUNDER-SHOWER.

Down wet sidewalks in the morning,
Walking to my work and scorning
Folks who lie a-bed a-sighing
For the sidewalks to be drying.

Odor of the rain-swept night;
Clear fresh pools in basins bright
Catching up the dewy light
  Out of heaven blue,
Giving back with wan pale smile
Tears cold clouds let fall a while
  Ere they slipt from view.
Blue-eyed broke the dawn above
  O'er these flooded lands of ours;
Still the glistening boughs above
  Hung with cold metallic flowers,
Dewy bits of heaven clinging
To the windy branches swinging
O'er the pleasant streets that lie
Wet and gleaming to the sky.
Waking sparrows' twittering mirth;
Life a-stir across the earth;
Faces moving to and fro,
Going whither? who should know?
Oh, 'tis pleasant to the eye
  To look out upon the world
  Like a crystal rose empearled,
Ere the rainy dews are dry;
Ere the drops are warmed away,
Lovely tears on lids of day,
And the dreamed-of eyes unclose
From the mist of sweet repose.

Down wet sidewalks in the morning
Walking to my work and scorning
Folks who lie a-bed a-sighing
For the sidewalks to be drying.

"ET TU"—

You who so wing the blue,
How can you bide so long on earth,
Swinging long minutes through
On beechen branch, nor spurn its prosy worth
For the sheer lyric air?

Each moment, think I, you will drop
Like a flame meteor tanager
Toward earth, to soar again,
Singing more wild the pain
Of joy that for the world's sake must not stop.—
Instead, you cock your head—and *hop*.

PROSPECT STREET.

(*Although I walked upon the sidewalk,*
It was a sort of deified walk.)

1.

Brown leaves were rustling in the hedges
Where red the berries glowed;
A wind that was a gallant song
Went rustling, racing all along
The length of Prospect road.
And many folk with heart of June
Jammed hats on heads that afternoon,
Sailed slanting to the wind like ships,
With joyous laughter on their lips—
Forgot last week it snowed!

2.

Two lovers walked ahead of me,
As it was very plain to see.
I had to leave them finally—
And once I had to blink:
When on the sidewalk looking down
I saw a slug creep, black and brown,
And soft as silk (I think).

3.

I saw a lady with a skirt
So bravely purple that it hurt—
She stooped and broke and tucked away
A pussy-willow's early spray—
Faint, darling balls of pearly gray;
And in her heart I doubt not, too,
That purple was a heavenly hue.

4.

I passed with equanimity
The mansion of Dean Jones.
From that wide prospect you can see

Old East Rock, silent, couchantly,
  Uprear his crusty bones—
Some fossil of gigantic birth
Disclosed by the retiring earth.

5.

I passed St. Francis' Orphanage:
  Beneath one barren tree
The children whooped—then slunk around
With quiet that should quite confound
The wariest blindman ever bound;
And sadly mussed, I fear, the ground,
  With sudden starts of glee.
A little from them stood alone
A Sister, with her black gown blown
  In crackling folds about;
And smiling from her sable house,
With snowy band across her brows,
  All cheerfully looked out.

6.

Near in a vacant lot dry, dead,
Briars and burdocks thick were spread,
Tangled and twisted, chafing hard
In the rough wind—sharp spines to guard
(Till her mysterious wakening)
The sleeping Beauty of the Spring.

THE COURIER.

SPLASH of the Spring, clean mud on lips
From May-mad, rain-run road,
When clattering hoofs strike out, strike out
The rune of the Royal Road!

Gray in the rain beside us slides
The coiling river down,
But we'll outstrip the sluggard tides
To the bridge of Brankly town;

And we'll outstrip the Spring, the Spring,
Though hard and fast she follows,
With feet of flame o'er field and lane,
And down the dead-wood hollows.

For first to town in mist and fog,
White and cold and dank,
Mire and mud to knees from the bog,
With clatter and clash and clank,—

Over the bridge to Brankly town
That seems like a dream of death!—
Then turn, O turn, the cold mists burn
With fire of fever's breath!

Up to the bridle an urchin leaps,
The landlord's apron flutters,
His bellowing voice bids, "Welcome, man!"
—There's a click of sleepy shutters,

And heads look down in Brankly town
And whisper, "Who is this?"
(With mud to my nose you see nobody knows
Who in the devil it is!)

And I laugh as I sweep off my draggled cap,
Draggled I fancy with reason,
And making a bow, "I've a letter for you;
I'm the post-boy of the season."

Click the shutters on twitter of talk
(Sun's on the dripping eaves,
Scent of rain on street and walk
And the shade trees' tender leaves)—

Down the stairs with pattering feet
Come the folk of Brankly town,
And there are parasols green and red
And many a silken gown.

And such a murmur and buzz of talk,
And such a crowding and crushing!
You'd think 'twas a Fair or the Fourth of July,
The way they were edging and pushing!

"The note, the note! . . . Who'll read it now?"
So I left them there in the throes,—
Like the man who looks for his spectacles
When they're right on the end of his nose.

And on through pleasant Brankly town
To the plashy road beyond,
Into the fog and drip again
By the reedy, sodden pond—

Mud under hoofs that squirts and spurts,
Lash of the clinging trees,
Scent of the earth—rich, clean, till it hurts;
The wind, the gallop, the ease!

For we'll outstrip the Spring, the Spring,
Though hard and fast she follows,
With feet of flame o'er field and lane
And down the dead-wood hollows!

MAINE AGAIN.

This afternoon I climbed a slope
That quite belied the sluggish plain
Of fallow lands, and breathed of Maine,
Of Maine, and of a hope.
Rearing no timid promontory,
It put aside their sleek content—
Smug towns of tax and toll and rent—
Looked toward the sea and took the glory.

Great God, it is a blessed sight
To see the blue waves roll once more
Their plumed myriads 'gainst the shore,
And it is more than keen delight
To feel the touch of air so right
On cheek and hands, move clean and cool
Through lifted hair. . . . Ah, what a fool
To live and die like rats down there,
Each in his little proper lair,
Delving away, ambitious mole,
To get himself a lordlier hole!—
While this wide wonder, this calm sea,
The hills, the clouds that wander free
Whisper (O softly), "Share with me!"

Ah, thus it is in Maine! There is
A width, a breadth, a starkness clean;
The roads are winding, sinuous, lean;
The hills keep their old mysteries:
Her sons die or decay—but these
Brood with their ancient agony—
Old faces chiseled gray with years,
Old features furrowed by the tears
Of some dethroned, sad deity.
They keep their state beneath the sky;
They count not ages creeping by.
And ever upward, note on note,
Swims a melody, dim, remote,
As of revelers fain and far
Where shadow-weaving breakers are.

Hear the hills of their reveling?
Is it the sea that sings this thing?

—O sudden clear, O clear and sweet!
From out of sight below somewhere
A climbing shout, and one more near,
That floated up in beat on beat
Of melody than tears more rare,
From stoutest hearts, whose only fear
Was—just to be the last up here!
"Last one up's a nigger, nigger! . . .
You're a nigger, you're a nigger!"
Up, behold, an urchin figure
Sprawl and squirm over the crest!
"Who's a nig-ger, who's a nig-ger?"

Hark to the victor! him attest,
O dirty face and shirt quite shocking,
And alas, thou truant stocking,
Bidding all the world to see
Dirty Tommy's grimy knee!
Up pants Dickie carelessly:
"Aw, say, who told you I was racin'?"
"O' course you was!—*I* seen you chasin'!"

O rippling laughter of the sea,
Flung in defiance up to me,
Bidding me change that old refrain,
To be in Maine, to be in Maine!
For there are greater things, I ween,
Than ever the hills of Maine have seen
Glassed in their still lakes crystalline. . . .
The breakers are tumbling merrily,
Flinging aloft in note on note
The deathless triumph . . . rich, remote . . .
Till the ancient hills of humanity
Shake in their aged agony. . . .
Old faces chiseled gray with years,
Old features furrowed by the tears
Of some dethroned, sad deity.

IT IS A CURSE.

It is a curse to have had none to care;
No loving thing to comfort with a kiss;
No eyes to laugh away the dim abyss
Of weary days with words unasking bliss,
And bring the stars out in the calm sky there.

It is a greater curse to have had these,
And yet not to have found God's world fulfilled,
But just the gray arena where is spilled
The wine of life, till Love at length be stilled,
And eyes look bright with subtle vacancies.

LOST SHIPS.

ALONG the slowly swelling sea
Merchant ships that morn were three.
They stood up straight and true and well,
Elba and *Ind* and *Isabel.*
The last faint sigh of the dying gale
At sunset bore another tale—
As if from foam-quenched lips were heard
"Margaret," and no other word.
In sunny havens far away
Merchants may pace full many a day.
Other hands their gold shall tell,
Singing the while this sad dirge well,
"*Elba* and *Ind* and *Isabel.*"

In shadows of perpetual storms
Darkly lie lost vessels' forms.
But the spelt gold of names yet sheds
A magic round their oozy beds.
What flooding radiance one would find
Where sea-deep lies the *Golden Hind!*
The *Swallow* lies in twilit gloom;
Wine of the sea is *Rose-in-Bloom.*
With old and shaggy-muzzled guns
The *Revenge* lies down by her galleons.
Sparrow-Hawk and *Birkenhead*—
What of their sad names need be said?
Only sing them low and well,
As *Elba, Ind* and *Isabel.*

Northward, watched by icy eyes,
Coldly the black *Titanic* lies.
Something harder to understand
Brooding lies by Ireland.
Past mounded ooze and twitching weed
Glide moon-like figures memoried.
No use, my child, now, black with death,
Upward to fight for one clear breath.
Lie still, lie still, as in your bed;

'Tis nothing but a dream you're dead.
Motionless through the centuries
The shadows float beneath the seas.
There through the heavy, rayless green
Lips moving without sound are seen;
And dim wide eyes float peeringly
Behind the weedy mystery
Of gaping sides; and all around
Stares the cold loneliness of the drowned.

Hers not the simple tale to tell
Of *Elba*, *Ind* and *Isabel.*
Meekly her great soul comes to greet
The dim ghosts of that vanished fleet;
And none deny her gloried seat.
Antilles and *Ancona* lost;
Tuscania with what bitter cost—
Ah, who shall ever sing them true?
Sussex and *Lusitania*, too!
Alas, the fairy minstrelsy
Of elfin bells of memory!
How can they bear our aching pain?
Now must we find some new refrain,
Some other counting of the cost,
Some other plaint above the lost
Than dirges woven wildly well
For *Elba*, *Ind* and *Isabel.*

DOLOR SAECULORUM.

I said, "I will trust the whole
To these radiant sweet entreatings—
Not body alone, but the soul,
With its low, unheard heart-beatings."
And I stretched my hands in scorning
To the passionate, kindly sages;
And I turned deaf ears to the warning
Of the ages.

I found most sweetest pangs
In sweetest, secret meetings;
I thrilled to beautiful hands,
And nearer, dearer greetings;
And I heard the faery laughter
Like a bird's sweet hidden note.
But the long night's stillness after
Took me blind by the throat.

O gentle and pure forever!
Still have you always smiled,
Forgiving again, as ever
You forgave him, a little child?
Or still do you trust him blindly,
Calling him good and true,
Naming names proudly, kindly,
As mothers do?

O gentlest, cruel believing!
Harder than all I bear,
Or the pain of your knowing and grieving,
Is your love that is like despair.
Where, where is the sin that can save us
From the reach of that love, set us free,
Make you hate us, and so enslave us
In our liberty?

Let the Whirlwind of God overtake us,
And bury us deep in His Wrath!

Turn from us wholly, forsake us,
  Blind us, and give us to Gath!
Why, in those hours of blindness,
  When that excellent death we cherished,
Could we not there at last, by Fate's kindness,
  Have found it and perished? . . .

Then ever her tears come smiling,
  And the dear lips tremble through. . . .
No more of this weak reviling!
  Still there is work to do—
Hark to the promise that calls us!
  Yet may the race be won,
Ere the last brave splendor befalls us,
  And the fight is done!

Oh, I know the soul shall recover
  Some gleam from the wreck of our youth,
From the waste of our loves, a lover,
  From the lies of our dreams, a truth;
Some leap of Promethean fire,
  Some desperate chance—not the worst;
Clear draught of a purer desire
  In our bitterest thirst!

It may be we never shall know
  The things in our folly forsworn,
And the love we long for so
  Must remain for ever unborn;
But at least through our own sad lack,
  And the look of that dismal crew,
Somehow we yet win back
  To the hope that we knew.

Ah, were it worth the endeavor,
  Even yet here redeemed—yes, I
Could sing you a song, as never
  You have heard it before, and die.

O hark through the misty to-morrow
Man's proud, sad, eloquent speeches,
Like the sound of the wind in its sorrow
O'er the desolate beaches!

Once I trusted and lost the whole
To those radiant sweet entreatings—
Not body alone, but the soul,
With its low, unheard heart-beatings;
And I stretched my hands in scorning
To the passionate, kindly sages;
And turned deaf ears to the warning
Of the ages.

THE SHATTERING.

WHITER than summer foam afar,
Or daisy sheen
Past meadows where the marshes are,
Like the sea white and green—
The cold panes with their glaze of frost,
And the sun's glint, as the Arm crossed
Gleaming and glistening, sinuous, lean,
Driving the tireless wheel
Nine clattering steel floors feel,
Silently, swiftly, 'mid the even roar
Of miles and miles of shore.
—Outside were only walls like these, I knew,
With endless staring eyes: and so
The frosty panes that shut the view,
And made it all things fresh and new below,
I was even thankful for.
There were no woods nor close-cropt pastures now—
That was a picture-book of long ago
I could not quite forget, quite leave somehow. . . .
Strange, the brand-newness of each wakening day then.
I could not have believed I should grow gray, then.

—Yes, yes, the head-bolt snapt. I could not dodge
In time. It cut my face and body too
With tiny splinters prickling through,
While, too, strange, sickening bulks would lodge
Softly. . . .
The splendid windows all were wide,
Splintered from side to side,
Letting the sun see in
Where I had been
So many months and months ere I was freed!
Fair flashing seas were on the beach,
And there was wind, with largeness round,
And light and sun and untaught speed
And mighty speech
And air in lungs like wine new-found,
Dug from forgotten caverns underground,

Cooler, clearer than any air's clean kiss;
Till my heart shouted, This
My soul foresaw to me
When youth a-surge leaped like a deathless stream
From airy eminence eternally
In thunder and in splendor; and the Sun
Shivered the cloak of smoke, the Golden One
Bursting the doors of Heaven, hanging thin-spun
O'er the sheer rocks pure orient rainbow showers!
Brave trumpet lips to speak eternity,
Guessing no sluggish ebb of age or dream
Nor petty penury,
Nor want, nor fading of sweet flowers
That freighted those free hours!

Now that again this thing has come to be,
O shout, lips burning
With the old yearning,
Audacious liberty!
Spite of the grinding of the grist
Her sweet lips may be kissed!
Spite of the weaving of your swords
Through the strange startled air,
I will be there
To give her those high gracious words
That were almost forgot
Where men's souls rot.
Nay, swing your flaming blade
And let it fall! I am no whit afraid,
Nor would be, were it the gathering Scythe sublime
Of austere-stepping Time!
Strike, strike,
Arms, legs, chest, features, all alike,
Stripping unclean to the keen air
Body once naked fair!
The studdings reel,
Shivering like crazy wind-shook reeds—
These are *thy* deeds,
And this the turning of *thy* Fabled Wheel,

Thou false, iniquitous
And unjust God! See how thou treatest us!

This bleeding flesh is thine
For dark purpureal wine,
Pressed in the choked wine-press
Of wretchedness;
And these moist sweating sacks
Crammed with the pulpy grape,
With puffed cheeks, puckered lips' blown shape,
Down dusty ways in the hot breathless air,
Sweating, on groaning backs
Slaves bear,
With naked, dusty feet
And souls unlifting from their tread's dull beat,
For the clear beakers by thy viands sweet.
Lord, Lord,
Thy groaning board,
Crowned with the wine of wine,
It is mine, *mine!*
I bring it morn and eve
And eve and morn abhored,—
It is mine, mine, believe!
—Strike not—I did not say it! It is Thine—
Take it—Not the red flail
To tear us so. . . .
No, no. . . .
Christ-Baal!

. . . Too sultry way,
Where moves no breeze
The cool green tops of swaying trees,
Nor round whose branching broad roots play
Ice-crystaled streams with runes of the noon day,
And soft deep grass, and dwellers in it,
The grasshopper and linnet,
And clover for slow blundering bees;
No, nor beneath round moon
Spattering with silver spray

Night Naiads in their play,
O'er chattering pebbles flees
The gleeful tune—
Lip-lyrics in the night's high noon
Of no parched way.

And I stood in a road, and to my hands
Like waves white daisies blew and blew—
Only a swell of swaying lands
Against great clouds that grew
And changed and formed and frowned anew,
Leaning across the field that fled
Like a blanched girl in dread
Into my arms for refuge, where there's none!
To think that things so sweet
Should throw
Scared, fluttered hearts before the feet
Of such a helpless one!—
Yet blow, daisies, blow, and the white clover,
Red devil's bane for blood 'neath cheek of snow,
With the rough kisses of the sky showered over;
His arm, the road, around thee pressed,
Straining thee so unwilling to his urgent breast.
Is the sky then so rude a wooer?
Methought a maid with such a fond pursuer
Bending from heaven to plant
His passionate kisses, pant
Behind her flying tresses like great Pan of old,
Would turn and fold
In spirit-strong embrace,
Past Syrinx' grace,
The freighted word of the old world renewer!
—Now steals a change upon the place;
The rushing field fades quietly; the lands
Dim into peace and rest like twilight skies.
It is sleep, sleep,
Or trance as deep. . . .

Only the flaming of hot brands
Past tired eyes;

And the contraction of slow bands
Where the heart lies;
And the limp feeling of strong hands
When the head droops, man dies.
Sweetly . . . again . . . again . . .
There is no further pain.

WITHDRAWN.

HERE by green lapping piles she idly rides,
At last put by;
Lifting or falling with the patient tides
That ask not why,
But bear her useless weight ungrudgingly.
Only her drooping hawsers indolently
Claim her for land, nor unlock freedom yet.
Yet soon I know her spirit will be free
That like a ghost about her shadowy guards,
Her silent decks and depths, still watches, wards,
Lest those blank panes seem all too glazed and set
That never more shall glimpse the open sea.

Surely somewhere about her faded form
Lingers the mist of a remembered storm,
When all this solid bulk
Reeled wildly over waves that thundered 'neath
These shuddering guards in blinding, smothering wreath,
Showers of steel-tipt spray—no sluggish hulk,
But a live thing amidst those dogs of death,
Snarling and snapping at her 'scaping sides—
While these mute, motionless masts that dreaming stand
Traced o'er the heavens with a wide, free hand
The torture of those tides!
Ah, surely yet
Thou canst not all forget!
Within thy sapless bones, so past their prime,
There is the memory of a better time!

Ah, no . . . silent and quiet as a twilight dream.
Better some deeper-graven theme,
Some glowing sea, or lovely, far-off place
These blurring fingers cannot quite efface.
Is there no phantom gleam
Ere the down-dropping of the whispering night?
No last-seen island, breasting the broad roll
Of Atlantic thunderers on her shining shoal,
And tawny cliffs upon whose perilous verge

Cling the torn pines, dark as the solid surge
Back-spurned in rage from such insulting might,
Baring white shimmering teeth in vain, in vain?
  Doth here remain,
In the last wreck of the remembering mind,
No lonely night with steady, icy stars
Tingling the numb, blind fingers of the wind
That feels along these unseen, trembling spars
For eery chords that he shall never find?
Hear I not now the fairy crooning strain,
The muffled moaning of the main,
That save for thee alone upon her breast
  To know her deep unrest,
Might slumber silently, and turning seem
To the far heavens but as a troubled dream?

Now here nor night of silent stars abides,
Nor the rich tumult of the racing tides.
The weeds weep from her sodden sides; they seem
  To mourn the untoward fate.
Onward and on the tides of traffic stream,
Gay in the morning of their strenuous date,
Performing the set tasks; while thou dost wait
The inevitable hour encumbering
The endless tides with this old, helpless thing.

—We cannot, cannot, since we understand
The bitterness of this blank, useless woe,
Calmly await the impotent, dull, slow
Hour of decay, raise not a voice, put by,
Made fast to a rotting pier, as thou dost lie,
Cluttering the brave, congested stream. Ah, no,
Even though the mighty tides ne'er question why,
It must not be! Even to the tottering end,
Let us put out with all our precious bales,
Our goods, our hopes, and costliest merchandise
In the last, best, eternal enterprise,
Until some time, in some unusual blow—
Our last skilled pilot clambering o'er our rails—
We greet the awaited, long expected friend.

PART II
POEMS OF THE WAR

DEDICATION, 1917.

LET us go quiet, clean,
The silver ways among;
Not singing what cannot be sung.
O never blow your bugles brave for me—
I am no hero-knight with courage keen,
Nor ever dream to be.
But stillness now—you will know what I mean,
You who have watched so long and tenderly;
Stillness as of the moon when clouds drift by,
Leaving a limitless sadness in the sky.

The husks of life are gone; only the corn
Waits for its golden grinding with the morn.

IF IT BE.

It little matters that we pass within
That silent house, and never shall come forth.
Our immortality is what has been;
We, the imperfect symbols, little worth.
All great things have existed since Time's birth:
Most fortunate, if we have found one out
And given it to our time. But beyond doubt,
If we have glimpsed a truth, reached for, and failed,
Sometime the fitting warrior shall be hailed
To strike it into life, a shining link
In the armor of our immortality.

The stars live on; the rush of life flags not.
We come and open like the rose, and drink
The eternal dews—till the dank earth's forgot,
And all our babyhood's poor softnesses
Are flushed to meaning, beauty, by the flow
Of the eternal tides, and we have quaffed
The glamor of their way, yea, scoffed and laughed
Blinded Oblivion back to his haunt! Can these
Fair limbs of form, these goodly hands, this brow,
Be but as colorless clay in the rich glow
Of eternity? echoes of a dear tone
We tremble to, till it seems half our own?
Ah, no, these are but cynic-reasoned lies,
Naught, naught! Have I not seen my mother's eyes?

No wonder in the Spring we dream it so,
When the fields freshen, and birds come, and the air
Presses our lips with lips so fresh and fair.
They gave their love to Petrarch long ago;
Their beauty does not fade; they cannot die.
And oh, to hear the immemorial cry,
Out of the clouds poured down, skylark a Shelley heard,
And outsung in the morning of his prime!
The same wild notes—I hear his dizzy word!
Where now is the brave singer? Our brief time
Is but a ray of light on things that are,

And death is darkness.
Yet not so do I
Despair, wishing this dreaded thing afar.
Because *I* wake not, never stir, nor heed
Your anguished cry beyond the gray abyss,
Feel not the trembling of your dear, dear kiss,
Nor heed a voice that makes death hard indeed—
Shall I presume that Love no longer is?

TROOPS TO SEA.

ONLY when you are sleeping,
And alone the great ships lie,
Breathing like fabled monsters
Their slow breath to the sky,

And the world has waned to a shadow,
We clear and put to sea.
Soft in the darkness we pass you,
Lady of Liberty.

The loose ice gently crashes,
Meeting our moving prow.
Never, of course, you know it,
But we are leaving now.

And we must press in the darkness
To the rails, a whispering throng,
Each in the darkness seeing
Clearly whose love is strong.

You will look out in the morning,
And simply we shall not be.
Soft in the darkness we passed you,
Lady of Liberty.

A CALL AT NIGHT.

Far into dreamless sleep a near voice creeping:
"To Poste C. Glas—the road to Avocourt."
Ah, weary, now, be sure,
To lift tired body, stiff and drenched with sleeping,
And then steal forth as to a lover's tryst,
Down the dim streets where o'erthrown walls sit weeping,
A ruined city, in the moonlit mist.
Then out through fields, and the cool stars are o'er;
But here the mist hangs like the earth's white breath,
Muffling afar those droning guns of death,
The sleepless murmur of a tortured shore.

Over those ghostly fields a mile or more.
Then silently the forest's prison-door
Closes behind us, blotting the last gleam
Of light to guide us. Now all noises seem
Magnified greatly; the road under us
Shifts sickeningly, a passage perilous
In gloom alive with voices; vague, near calls;
Sound as of falling torrent that ne'er falls.
A skidding truck sinks helpless in the mire.
A whining shriek—cries of "Take care, take care!"
The white mists leap to sudden seething fire;
The trees stand black and gaunt. A shuddering shock
Wrenches the old earth's ribbed, unbending rock,
Yea, seems to snap her backward, broken sheer,
Screaming and helpless in the darkness there.
Still whispering steel tries the wide atmosphere,
And strikes in the soft mud around us here.
Then stillness falls.

We hear the stray leaves flutter
Softly around us, whispers that would utter
We know not what—waiting. The forest drips.
Now for some moments no word parts our lips.
Then, "Well, I guess that's all for now." And stiff,
Especially in the knees, we stand straight-backed,
Survey the helpless *camion*, wondering if

Another truck can do the rescue-act.
"We'd like to help, of course."—"Oh, no, no, no!
Why, it is nothing—every night it's so —
One anyway gets stuck. We'll be all right. . . .
Been a long time in France? . . . Ah. . . . Well, good night.'
"Good night."

The forest's gloom is left once more.
Up a long slope we softly move. O'erhead
The bright stars shine as if there were no war,
And at that moment no one wept her dead.
Out past a ruined farm left desolate
Amidst its riven orchard, blackened, gaunt.
The muffled guns seem like a boaster's taunt,
There in the sea of mists that stagnant wait,
Shrouding the valley—some vast, blind, lost shore,
Wrapped in its lonely, unremitting roar.

A voice in sleep, insistent, low, obscure:
"To Poste C. Glas—the road to Avocourt."

LE MORT.

HERE on this stretcher now he coldly lies,
A burlap sack hiding his beaten head.
The idle hands seem heedless lumps of lead,
And the stiff fingers of abnormal size.
I almost stooped to brush away the flies,
Musing if yet she knew that he was dead.

Gayly laughing they brought him
Up the dusty road,
Chatting as if they thought him
But a luckless load,
And laid him here beside this scarred old tree,
Till some death-wain should chance by luckily:
Those wagons carry back the honored dead.
But, necessarily,
On the return trip they will carry bread.

All day he lay there, and all night,
Wrapped in the shining mists that swim
Along the ground. The sullen might
Of thunder shaking the earth shook not him.
And strangely lightening through the mist that crept,
Moving like some slow, luminous, foaming sea,
Washing black shores of twisted tarn and tree,
The flaring star-shells here
Over his lonely bier,
White meteor-tapers, his pale vigil kept.

NIGHT-WORK.

ALONG that lane of soft, uncertain light,
Beacon of dust in a blank sea of night,
Leaning far forward, ears, eyes, hand intent
For sound or sight out of that blackness sent.
Only slow-thudding thunder on our heels;
Dull spasm of guns that less one hears than feels,
Shocking the air with long insucking breath—
Till the strange silence after falls like death.
Now the held shriek of "doucement, doucement," groan
Of some soft, bleeding, ticketed being, prone
On the slung stretchers swaying hideously,
Till night is kind, that eyes may never see.
Suddenly vague, uncertain noises start
Out of the blackness, stopping the schooled heart:
Stamping patter of endless coming teams,
Voices, a curse, grit of a wheel that seems
Scraping our very hub-cap, shrinking by;
Guns, carriages, munitions, trucks of supply,
Upthundering, sweeping—vulturous wings that swoop
Darkly out of a dream, shadows that stoop
From some grim, vaguely dark, discolored sky.
Lo, like a dream they now have hurried by.
Look back: once for a moment are they seen
Topping the ridge; a star-shell's whitish green
Uplifts, soars, wavers, falls—and all is gone.
The soft penumbra of the road shifts on
Beneath us; once more on the tingling brain
The motor's throb sinks like an old refrain.
One of the swaying wounded moans in pain.

OBJECTIVE GAINED.

A BED, a bed, and a table bare—
Five leaped up in the candle's flare—
And there—and there—
Sh-h-h! You mustn't remember, but always know—
Always, always . . . Oh. . . .
Over us there in the gloom
Waved one poplar plume,
Black, unshattered, a shadow,
A gloom, a plume, a tomb!

Spurts of shadows with cores of fire begin,
And round us, round us spin.
Always he crumples there like an empty cloak,
His helmet clicks on the cobblestone,
And I'm alone, alone.
Never the easy-coming breath,
Only the gasps that grip and choke. . . .

But always that town we win,
Where the huddled streets roar down to death,
Black doorways, with Work, Work, Work within.—
He had a grin, but he had no chin—
What did he put his dinner in? . . .

BASTILLE DAY—1917.

Penobscot Bay, Penobscot Bay!
Oh, to be back but once to-day!
Rockland drifting into dawn
From the ocean miles withdrawn;
Mists that creep and sleep and glide,
Clinging to the quiet tide;
Camden nestling 'tween the knees
Of giant watchers o'er the seas;
And the ribboned road that runs
Along the shore where I rode once
In the morning after pain
(Oh, but so to ride again,
In the morning after pain!).
Camden? No—a name more fond,
Up the river far beyond,
Where the gray old fort looks down
With a fixed and foolish frown,
And the swirling currents rush
Darkly in the twilight hush,
When the shadow of red walls
Like witchery o'er the river falls.
And all the town, when tides are high,
Gaze where wavering shadows lie,
Mists of corded masts and bales,
Glimpse of pictured boyhood tales.
Ah, the shady streets that still
Go ambling up o'er Pious Hill!
Bucksport! Oh, ye Gods that bless,
Take me back, and thankfulness
Shall almost break my heart to ye!
Here at this moment now I see
Every street as it should be . . .
And the same faces, fearfully.

Comfort it is, they may not know
This strangely simple, natural woe;
The look I had last night, the spot
Creeping and purple, and the clot

Of gathering blood, the whispering sighs,
And then the misty, closing eyes.
Now in the quiet earth he lies.
When I am near, and it is so,
Somehow I do not seem to know
Directly of this thing, but start,
Trembling and troubled in my heart,
Lest I awake all suddenly,
And this strange, unknown man to me,
Should somehow be. . . .

Ah, it is fire, and it is ice!
This mud-soaked, bleeding sacrifice,
Red from beyond the rim of the hills
Where dully thudding the cannon kills,
Like a being mad with insensate wine!
It is not mine, it is not mine,
The woe or fear that shakes me so!
All the beloved names I know,
Luminous faces, the dear hands
Touched the last time in other lands,
Voices that linger when dreams come,
Bearing me softly, surely home . . .
It cannot, never must be there
As here, while strength is left to bear.

Yea, this the brave "Fourteenth of July!"
Witness the Germans' grim reply,
Thousands of slain, or worse than slain,
The day that the armies may drink champagne!
O sweetly unruined bells are ringing,
Sweetly that stirring hymn they are singing;
And the red-cross cars keep bringing, bringing.
Alas, alas, the shriveling pain,
Till I must not think. Dear God, again
To be in Maine, to be in Maine!

IMPROMPTU.

Back with our Division from the front—
Of course the inevitable affront
That had to come. Rest's welcome enough—and yet,
Nothing to do now but just sit and sweat—
No use to any one by any chance
In a nasty little hole of northern France.
So we must think of friends and others dear,
Read their damned letters worshiping us here,
As if we'd done something to make us boast.
And now *en repos!* Cæsar's well-known ghost!

Winifred, don't you wish that I were back?
God knows *I* do. Just had a bad attack,
Worse even than usual, as I lay alone
In the warm field here, let the sun soak through
Limbs all relaxed—just thinking—oh, of you—
And everything. . . . The wind came down,
Laughing, winning, sweeping me free:
Once more the mind's exultant certainty;
Again I seemed to see
The river sparkling there by Bucksport town,
The rotting wharves, the soggy dory-slips,
The lazy, idle fitting-out of ships—
Haunts that I knew—
And you.
Alas, the chocolate peppermints I bought up street,
And brought down there to eat—
Perched each upon the favorite rotten pile,
So dangling down our feet—
Nay, do not smile!
Hearing the fearful flowing of the tides
Round our old haunted hulk's ingulping sides;
Till twilight came,
Hushing the river and the murmuring mill,
Suddenly shading black the opposite hill,
While the slant rays with a warm, quiet flame
Over the drowsing village lingered still.
Supper at your house, and the things you made!

The plans for trips! To-morrow it would be
Down to Castine,
Along the Docian shore so barren, lean,
Till, bursting from the shimmering white birch-glade,
Lo, the blue firs above the blue, blue sea,
Toppling from rocks whose feet
What snowy breakers beat!
And the salt air
Douses our dust-choked lungs with wine,
Draws its cool, tugging fingers through our hair—
Song of the sea and sun, road and a ride divine!
You'll sit in front? Good! good to be alive
To-morrow, you beside me, as we drive!
Oh, I'll be there for you at half-past nine;
I'll see the others of the crowd; we'll meet—
Say, at the foot of Franklin street;
And don't forget the deviled eggs, my dear!
Good night, sleep tight . . .
And I am here.
O Lord, when working it's not half so bad;
But this—this makes me selfish—and—damned mad.

INACTION.

No word to-day.
How the days lag like very weeks away,
Listless and careless if they move or stay!
Ah, now to me this envious afternoon,
Blinding the earth with smiles;
The village-square, the fountain's falling tune;
White dazzling walls, red roofs' eternal tiles,
And over them green, wavering tree-tops, cool
As the slow-loitering, shadowy pool
Beneath the bridge where children hang by hours,
Dreaming of green-eyed dragons, dungeon-towers;
Ah, these to me are wasted treasures all.
Only I hear insistent voices call,
Questions, and never answers; and no word
From you. Surely to-day I should have heard.

Oh, I know well—and true, too, more or less—
What you would say to soothe this restlessness:
"We serve, though waiting."
And the labor's there;—
And others in the intolerable glare
Die, horribly die, for things that we hold dear!
O faces drawing ever near, more near,
Till it is sometimes difficult to bear
The love of your dear lips, the questioning eyes,
And frame the perfect, passionless replies—
It is your lineaments I trace
In every stricken face;
Your breaking voice that cries
Over the wretched things that were so bright.
When, when will darkness rise?
When comes the light?

Surely, if ever, these the dawning hours!
There is a stir throughout the land;
The legions of Verdun advance
Once more for truth and France;
The splintered woods of Avocourt are ours,

Gray ghosts of forests gone;
And, where the Julian Alps like giants stand,
Italy still pours on,
The day of Austrian overlordship done!
And many a younger son
From over sea—
But a pale promise of what things may be—
Adds to the faith of stricken earth's salvation
Not the mere coming of an untried nation,
Not the despair of hollow Germany,
But the clear clarion of a liberty
Mightier to overthrow no tottering Czar
Than all the arrays of men and millions are!

Ah, if this were indeed the end, the end!
Bitter it is to pause here patiently,
Hoping and fearing; the long hours to spend
Brooding on thoughts of home, each word
That lately you have heard;
Counting the days till you can hope again
To hear from Maine.

EPITAPH FOR "FIAT," OUR LITTLE PUPPY; DIED AUGUST 22.

HERE upon the breast of earth
"Fiat" ends his mortal mirth.
Gayly o'er his curly head
Blossom, all ye poppies red;
And you stream by which he lies,
Murmur tenderest obsequies—
For when rolling years have passed,
And the world has found at last
Through the grief of wiser minds
Peace that he so lightly finds;
We shall scarce remember him.
So to-night full softly brim
With our tears, our love, our laughter;
And repeat them ever after.

THE WATCH-TOWER OF THE OISE.

I could not sleep.
Slowly and sullenly afar
The muffled thudding guns that never sleep
Pound out their insane litany of war.
The morning mists are deep,
And the wet bushes splash through, cool to the skin;
The stinging nettles creep
Like fire upon ice, as by I leap
Impatient with strange doubts within,
Eager to gain the lonely tower,
And watch alone, like some wild druid seer,
The quiet, trembling hour
When dawn is near.

The woods are left, the fields break wide.
Ah, truly, what a prospect here
From this gray tower-top, here on the mountain-side!
Slowly the subtle distances
Resolve themselves in misty slope on slope,
Where the white coiling rivers float and grope
On soft, uncertain shores. Now a dim breeze
Wraps the old walls in shivering melody;
Cool, cool on cheeks, and lips, and eyes, and hair.
Stark to the right, a line of staggering trees
Stand gauntly there,
Like ancient sentinels stricken hideously,
Their ghosts, a fearful legion,
Haunting the lean fields of this outland region.
Somewhere beneath the bosom of this hill
The little village sleeps,
While the white fog slowly creeps:
Mothers and wives, old men—not, not their sons.
Hark, in the dawn so still:
Again the distant guns.

A streak of rose
Like the sweet shimmering verge of waking;
Some dewy petal shaking . . .

The shimmering radiance grows;
Yes, it is day.
Like a thin, shadowy spire the Eiffel Tower shows,
Scarce forty miles away.
Here from this Tower of the Oise to-day
I can see Paris.

They,
Ere the dread Marne, nearer than this,
Saw and believed; ah, nearer far,
And sweeping forward o'er their weaker foes,
Till like a landmark lost this tower rose,
Splendid and beckoning them! Brave, brave the bliss
Then to have been a German born
And looked, as on this morn,
Where Paris smiled and smiles! Most valiant youths,
Mayhap they never showed you books of truths,
But told you lies, and led you blindly by,
Thus wretchedly to die;
Gave you the law that was not for one man
Nor nation, but a hideous thing, whose span
Of life must needs be nearly done;
Put in your hand
Some iron-cold command,
And in your heart no dimly answering law;
Made you no more the husband, father, son,
But bade you obey, obey, whate'er the spirit saw.
O blind obedience, blind, purblind,
Till surely now you find
What fatal thing is this that you have done!

But is it well
To call these children sons of hell?
Surely you know even now the prisoner sees,
When cheating dreams have set him sadly free,
Dear and loved faces—screwed up hatefully?
There stood a lad last night outside the gate,
Prussian—yea, even one of these!—
Delivered up from chaos, one

Snatched from the hand of death, death at Verdun;
Dazed, stunned, and left disconsolate
'Neath the too awful weight
Of waking to the tryst his country kept—
Better have swiftly fallen, sweetly slept.
And, till the fields grew dim,
I stood and talked with him.
His low voice seemed more mournful deep to me
Than the dim murmuring sea
Instealing over shoals in silken swell.
Once only an unspeakable
And breaking agony
Submissive sadness could no more compel,
Broke forth in anguish: "Thank God, God,
That brother is too young, too young, too young!"
Oh, that that word were flung
With blind and burning tears afar!
Sadder than France's woes so truly sung,
Germany's adoration in this war,
The seed of discord's deeds
Now spread o'er earth like flaming wild-fire weeds!
No king nor country, nor ideal state
Can ever consecrate
This torn and trampled, flesh-bespattered sod!
Only for one thing can this stricken age
Its bestial battle wage—
That never upon earth again
Shall fall this stain;
Else are the lives and shames, the splendid givings vain.

Shall it not be
As in this hour, quiet, calm, and free?
The dawn, it is the dawn;
The crimson poppies blow
In shimmering fields below.
Oh, upon earth there shall be no such woe,
When muffling mists are gone,
I know, I know!
The wind shouts pæans through the trees' strong limbs,

Trembling so stately in the morning's glow;
And in my heart are unheard, stirring hymns.
Let the great guns roar out,
The hideous pageant roll,
That at the last the nations, saved, may shout,
For ever, ever ends this nightmare of the soul!

WAKING.

A SUDDEN swirl, the sunlight broke,
As to a swimmer's upward stroke
Out of the darkness to the sun,
Dazzling the day. . . . Ah, summers gone!
When will you come, blithe trips again,
Fleeting over the hills of Maine?

Laughter of voices gathered there;
Bright, bursting baskets' precious fare,
Alas, the crazy stunts we tried—
Often, it may not be denied,
Just "showing off"; the way we lied—
Those fabulous, sworn-to tales, received
In respectful silence, as if believed;
Then matched with a solemn *à propos*—
Modestly matter-of-fact, you know—
Till some one soared too wildly well:
Then, oh, the shrill shrieks that befell!
Tumbled the whole tower with a crash
Of splintering splendors, laughter a-flash;
King of the dunces, he was found,
And loud with acclaim and clamor crowned!

So, till the fated hour came,
With sober touch and cheeks that burn,
Muting our lips.—Homeward we turn,
Full-face into the sunset's flame.
And all the flaming, fading tide,
And all sad, brave things deified,
There from the gathering shadow-seas
Of flitting field and ashen trees,
Tremble and whisper at our side—
Till, like scared, hunted things, we fleet
Adown the quiet village street,
Where overhead the dark trees meet,
Like Gothic arches, old and high,
Cooling the colors of the sky,
And the blood's warmth, till your white smile
Shows Terror runs with us that aisle.

But then the glowing hearth's warm grace;
The older, re-assuring face;
A relieved laugh. On with the dance!
Life is no fearful, shadowy chance,
No grim field neither lost nor won,
No luring dream of hopes foredone!

Ah, now how sweetly smiles the sun
Over the valleys of Verdun.
Perhaps some other year, somehow,
Time may turn back for us; not now.
By now in Maine, summer is fled;
The gold leaves are fallen, withered, dead;
Like steel now shines the icy pond;
Like a knife the bare hills rise beyond,
Cutting the sky, gray, cruel, dull—
Barren, yet oh, how beautiful!—
The granite slope; the creeping spurs
Of irregular woods; the gray-blue firs,
Like stealing daggers o'er the hill;
While coldly blue skies shiver, thrill.

SEPTEMBER 7.

RUNNING, running, staggering, torture-sped,
Bringer of fearful tidings came.
His face was like a horror-laughing flame,
His knees were crimson with undarkened red
From comrades dying, or already dead.
Gasping he gave his message, and we fled
Down the lean, barren, shell-combed road,
His face before us as a living goad.

There by the ditch we found them, as he said.
Blindly the heedless thunders broke
With yelling laughter up the summer sky;
And rocks and trees were idly tossed on high.
We lifted them, the broken, moaning men,
And those that never spoke,
And staggered back that glaring way again.

A bleeding brother ever, ever nigh,
Days, days and nights. The curious gold ring;
His hand's strange warmth: until the day I die
I know I shall remember everything.

THEIR STRANGE EYES HOLD NO GLORY.

THEIR strange eyes hold no vision as a rule,
No dizzy glory. A still look is theirs,
But rather as one subtly vacant stares
Watching the circling magic of a pool.

Now when the morning firing becomes tame,
Out in the warming sun he tries to guess
Which battery they're after. "Let me see;
Which battery is there? which battery?
I wonder which. . . ." Again, again the same
Returning question—idle, meaningless.
Startled, he sighs—or laughs—or softly swears:
Mutteringly something of dear names declares
In the bitter cruelty of tenderness.

The planes drift low, circling monotonously,
Droning like many a drowsy bumble-bee
In summer morning. Only now and then
A whining shell, the mere formality
Of stupid war, calls back his thoughts again.

Suddenly near the unseen death swoops low,
Laughing and singing; and full pitifully
The startled eyes stare wide, but do not see
The whirling features of his Genie foe,
Safe in his summoned cloud. The quiet skies
Tell not his surest comings. With waved wands
A mist springs from the earth, and swaying stands
A veiling moment—sinks. . . . And there he lies
Face down, clutching the clay with warm dead hands.

ROBERT HALL, KILLED SEPTEMBER 12.

I know there is no word at all
To say about you now, Bob Hall.
We found the partly written letter,
And mailed it to your mother—better
It had not been. 'Tis queer to see
You resting here so peacefully,
'Mid alien crosses. Row on row
Over the gentle slope they go. . . .
And you alone . . . that is not so.
We knew Death could not always miss
Our lips in his blind, wandering kiss;
And you he touched. Yet not the less
Was it the lightning's suddenness.

MOTHER, IT IS NOT I.

MOTHER, it is not I who am stiff and chilled,
Cursing the aches that never can quite die,
Whether I come again, or am just killed.
The dead of Ypres and of Verdun am I,
The legions without stain;
And all that shadowy, huge, distempered brain,
Brooding o'er flaming farms beneath the sky;
The green Marne valley, like a chalice filled
With brimming peace again
At the cracked lips of trenches that remain
A voice for aye unstilled,
Soft as the even-flowing hours of pain
Beyond all wild cries shrilled;
And long, low twilights of dark fields untilled
Beneath the Flanders rain.

Then waste no woe, for now it is not I
Who love you till I almost fail my doom.
Sometimes when in the night the shadowy sky
Roars over us, where we deep buried lie,
Comes suddenly a light, and chokes a cry,
And I am with you in a lighted room—
Soft carpets spread along a shining floor;
And in the corners, shadowed in rich gloom,
Stand polished things; smiling you pause before
The waiting keys, head slightly turned to me.
And then begins the fountain many-rilled,
The rippling laughter of the flashing sea,
And each note falls a fairy tinkling bell,
And then in twos and threes, a swifter swell,
And loftier, louder, till—I cannot tell—
It lifts me—crashes, falls . . . and faint is shrilled
The shrapnel and machine-gun's chattering fear
In the cold moonlight, like a skeleton clear.
And I cling to you, calling God to heed;
And all my being's utmost hope and need
Is but to win the precious past once more,
Perfect, without a change. Yet I shall hear

Your voice, I well know, never as before,
Whether I come again, or am just killed.
The dead of Ypres and of Verdun am I,
The legions without stain;
And all that shadowy, huge, distempered brain,
Brooding o'er flaming farms beneath the sky;
The voices never stilled,
Soft as the even-flowing hours of pain
Beyond all wild cries shrilled;
And long, low twilights of dark fields untilled
Beneath the Flanders rain.

VERDUN BY MOONLIGHT.

Past the gray citadel to the dead city,
Dead in the moonlight, and its bones were white,
A skeleton so old it asked no pity;
White walls outfacing the slow-dreaming skies,
And in their pallid faces endless eyes,
And gaping mouths that shouted as we passed
Down lonely ringing streets that Autumn night.

The stores stood there; the silent theatre;
The banks, the dark hotels; occasionally
The gutted wrecks of what once used to be
Office or dwelling—all one moonlit blur
Of dreaming death, silent and vacant, vast
In hush of waiting. Some dread pestilence
Seemed to have swept the unknown people hence,
Leaving their city like a curious shell
Of blanching hues and corridors carven well,
Broken a little by the blundering sea.

AT BROCOURT HOSPITAL.

I had been writing letters late that night,
How I had seen Verdun, the city dead.
A blanket o'er the doorway masked our light
From aeroplanes low droning overhead—
Moonlight marauders from our friends across.
Something strong gave the blanket-mask a toss,
Flinging it in and up. The opening filled
With bright and solid gold; and all things came
Dancing and hiding in the leaping flame.
And then faintly it seemed the shrapnel shrilled,
Like elfin horns, slitting the dull wood through;
And on the roof the rocks beat a tattoo.
Then all was deaf and still. The air was blue;
And from the wreckage people crawled away;
And clearly in the moonlight others lay,
Quietly sleeping, heeding not the affray.

AFTER FRANCE.

All day the dizzy billows rolled
Against our lurching side;
And the wind sang till the brain rang
With a wild song and wide.

It took the rigging for its harp,
And an old plaint outflung.
My eyes were wet with the tugging wind—
Had ever I been young?

It was not possible, not possible,
We soon should see again
The faces and the forms beloved,
The woods and fields of Maine!

Yet I have seen; heard the still trees
Retell tales often told;
Cut cords of wood, and laughed at home
More gayly than of old.

Mother and father, sister—oh,
Sweet as relief of pain!
And the magic days in the Autumn-tide
When we knew the roads of Maine!

But now, it seems I was not there.
Those common weeks to me
Again are brave and strange and fair
As olden chivalry.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK!

Oh, I was one in the khaki-clustered shrouds,
And yells and shrieks and war-whoops tore our throats—
Our hearts were in the clouds!
O beautiful barges, and sweet ferryboats!
O Brooklyn Bridge! O whistles' ravishing shrieking!
I'm all choked up—you must excuse my speaking.
Old Battery Park! And there's the Woolworth plain!
Did we ever believe we'd see these sights again?
God bless y', Old Lady Liberty admired!
We trust your torch-arm isn't getting tired!

O Lord, O Lord! they'll take us to a camp—
It's enough to give a feller's guts the cramp!
But wait till we're out! wait till we get discharged,
And see if we don't make "liberty" look enlarged!
Wait till we hit those little old New York streets!
Wait till we amble into Bill's or Pete's!
Wait till you see us with a *Stack of Wheats!*

And home. . . . O good, kind God, most blessed Giver!—
They'll all be down to the station in the flivver!
Mother, it's you!—and Dad, God bless you! Mattie,
And May, Jake, Jane—and Lord, yes—even Hattie!

ECHO.

WHEN we're quite old and rickety in the knee,
Yet marching still together, ranks diminished,
Till here below our last parade is finished,
Still shall I see
The *Aquitain* creep up that roadstead slow,
The vessel of some dim and far mirage,
With all her freighted people peering down,
Silent, unshouting, by that towered town;
While on the waters softly float below
Huge, coiling snakes of sea-dimmed camouflage?

When other hands go fumbling this bronze cross—
Eyes staring up, a little at a loss—
Shall I remember in that far-off hush,
As now I hear and tremble, just the rush
Of shells through air—like naked souls flung screaming
Into the night, the doubt, the perfect dreaming?
When hands unused can't wind a roll puttee,
And these loose moulded clothes are shuffled off
That now seem flesh and blood and bone of me,
Hung up, with pockets emptied, clean enough,
Never all warm, but always cool and chill
From morn to night and night to morning still,
While we lie dreaming soft, as if reborn,
And wake and drowse and wake and drowse at morn;—
Yet will some straggling column keep its stride,
Those soggy ranks splashed gray with mud to the hips,
Hitching and shifting our Christless, goading packs,
While the hot breath, like a shallow, parching tide,
Sucks and flows over loosely parted lips,
And horses drip dead gray, except their backs?

Now the reek of the mouldy hay where we lay
Is upon me. The barn leaks drearily:
Hour after hour I hear the steady dripping;
And in a pause the busy mice go skipping.
Some one turns in the darkness, catching his breath
In little snorts, that sighing die away

Leaving the darkness tranced, an easy prey
To the cold hush of death.
But through that hush once more the rain beats drearily;
And one, with Time, stands patient sentinel,
While minutes drip like water in a well,
And close to me twenty men lie breathing eerily. . . .
At last the dawn comes, stiff and cold and gray,
Blotching brown clothes of men on dirty hay,
The huddled bodies I lie with,
Laugh with, curse with, eat with, die with.

SCARS.

THESE the beloved bodies you saw go
So proudly swinging
Along your million-throated lane,
Under the arches where our triumphs show,
Argonne, St. Mihiel, Château-Thierry, Aisne;
And all your singing,
And all the rapture of lit, lifted faces,
Flashed veils of flame, and tears, and last embraces,
And choking sobs that no one else should know!

O damnable shame! It is not so, not so!
How dares the heart be glad on such a day!
In the very moment of our overthrow,
When the dry word cracked "steady!" who should say,
Would it be earth quick-heaped on flattened head,
Or little biting, scorpion rifle-cracks?
Then eyes and heart, as well as hands, went red.
Now it was ours to lead forlorn attacks,
But not in those brave, dreamed-of ecstacies:—
The hot thick lava of the earth's ripe core—
Out of red flaming mouths I saw it pour,
And rise and rise, and grip our feet and knees—
Climbing—our armpits—then our wretched throats,
Thrown back and screaming! . . .
Faint, by slow degrees,
The Dawn, a gray-veiled Woman, glides forth pale,
Lingering a moment over shadowy moats,
And then beyond the line of scare-crow trees;
Till, at the last, she turns and lifts her veil. . . .

O tenderly for us, as well as those
Who mingle nakedly with the brown earth,
Yet lie securely beyond earthly woes,
Wrapt perfectly in virgin robes of fame;
For us, too, let your holy prayers arise,
For we, too, have our scars of sacrifice,
Invisible, remote from any blame.
These too, we would believe, are something worth

For the heart's peace.—Before what Mother's eyes
Can the too cruel gash disfigure long
The remembered nobleness of clearer grace,
Proud power that made her failing body strong?
The radiance of every unscarred face,
The loveliness of all fair things we see,
Or have been promised—children's shout and song;
The quiet, trusting hands of youth or age;
Old women and bent men, a reverent throng—
All these have joined to heap his heritage;
And maidens lovely in their chastity
Have touched him softly—and eternally.
Through brooding summer dreams the thought of him
Comes quivering o'er, as when a lake goes dim
To scudding gusts. So now to me it seems
Through us are saved the brave, unbroken dreams
Of all the many who need never guess
The haunting horror of our wretchedness.
Their lovely forms are saved, so fair and whole.
Ours not the lesser gift—a quiet soul.

NOW THAT FOR EVER HE MUST GO HIS WAYS—

Now that for ever he must go his ways
With this smooth, shining gash; or, all his days,
Never once leap a curbstone, climb, or swim,
Or dare to flip a train for God knows where,
Or ever ask her now if she could care—
Because all that is ended now for him;
For these things, shall he utterly grow dim,
The rosy blood stand still, the goodly hands,
Meant for some gesture of life's broad commands,
Fail like a faltering aim—his slightest whim
Or dearest hope subservient to others—
O kindest friends, devotedest of mothers;
Till through sweet, conscious words, the whole old story
Is haloed in a sort of saintly glory,
Some far enchantment, spell of Faëry—
With those far-thundering names, the Meuse, Argonne,
Become a catch-word Open Sesame,
A jingle and a game of nursery?
—Remember then the things that he has done,
Terribly, but in splendor of all tears,
In hideous shrieks and silence of sick fears,
That this sole, best objective might be won,
And not for self—who gave himself entire.
In the sweet verdure of your memory
Then keep his limbs yet blossoming whole and free,
Still as when, tingling to his finger-tips,
He dreamed the beauty of most glorious lips
Held burningly against his fierce desire,
And all life's bounty beckoned bravely large,
With sense new-born, a promise soft, sublime,
Of other hands and hearts and hopes sometime,
A look, a trait, which, common as it occurs,
Is his alone, or subtly, softly hers;
Till down that vista of futurity,
Yet once again youth's deathless legions charge
Beneath cloud-pinnacles of the sunset sea.
Then, when alone our being seems to aspire
Mysteriously beyond the reach of death,

Unfolding as a flower, body and breath—
Suddenly this proud, terrible, purging fire,
This dread, excoriating nations' pyre,
Caught him, his laughter and his little lust,
His strength, his manful boasts—and he was dust.
—Shall not some beauty of that time survive
Yet in your thoughts of him, to keep alive
More than mere dust, now that for all his days
Quietly passive he must go his ways?

EPILOGUE—1919.

THROUGH every doughboy's same old pet complaint,
Through dust and heat, and mud and wet and cold,
Through oaths and dull obscenity's worst paint,
And things too sick and dirty to be told,
Over and over on their young tongues rolled
Glibly, till the heart cries, "What a thing is man!"—
Somehow beneath that heap of rubbish lying
A coin laughs up, some all too precious good—
Better for showing without conscious plan.

O many a time man's named his Brotherhood,
And spent his days and nights in penitent sighing,
And served the poor, and founded learned schools,
And lived for God and Christ, and kept the rules;
But we had only rules of selling, buying,
We only dreamed of winning a better living
To lavish on our loved ones, undenying:
And so we gave—yet then there was no giving.
Our eagerest words acknowledged no desire
Of braver task or trust—the sudden fire
That since has turned even that blasé derision
To golden lines of song, the light, the vision
Of that immortal tale of alien dying!
O what a flame was there to lift men higher,
Purge all foul dross, yet not one trait destroy,
So yet we hold them safe as once we knew them!
In those first days, when much was base alloy,
A forced and even half-disgruntled duty,
Already pain, like a dizzy knife, cut through them:
Faces they had not dreamed were half so fair,
And smiles, mere greetings, words in no way rare,
Became a sudden agony of joy;
Until at last unveiled, a radiant beauty,
As of some worthier, fairer Helen, drew them,
Young men and old, to this their greater Troy.

Shall not some gleam of that divine adventure,
Some lasting memory serve the land they served?

Surely, the purpose that their bodies nerved,
Remembrance of those suddenly hurled to earth,
Who spoke but now, yet never speak again—
A single cry—this strangely natural pain,
And dull, precocious wisdom—seal the indenture
Of faith in comrades and a nation's worth.—
So through our building, buying, wooing, wiving,
The dreams by which we live, the things we prize,
A purer, clearer love, a nobler striving,
Make young again young hearts almost too wise.
Never till now we dreamed our heritage.
How many shuttered homes, all warmth within,
And light, and lifted faces there, begin
Dimly to feel the thing he can't explain,
And doesn't try—even as they feel the beat
And thud of traffic shuddering down the street,
Or hear swoln gutters roaring hoarse with rain. . . .
Subtle and far, the sapping of huge powers,
A nation's fall, and Russia's sickly rage. . . .

We are not of a different clime or age,
Playing apart our solitary rôle,
But one for ever with the larger soul
Encompassing this mortal life of ours!
What happier prophecy or hope was ever
Flung widely through the world, as through this land,
Not here, or there, but now on every hand,
Wherever the wind so bravely valiant strains
Down deep-cut valleys of the crawling river,
Over the barrier bluffs, and level plains,
Past capitals and ports, and lonely farms,
Broad inland seas, Chicago's sullen sky,
Or where Alaskan heights, like giants, lie
With heaven for ever in their snowy arms!

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